



The Stop Child Hunger Act of 2021

Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and Representative Mike Levin (D-CA) are introducing the *Stop Child Hunger Act of 2021* to establish a permanent, nationwide electronic benefits transfer (EBT) program for children during school breaks and closures to ensure children who rely on school meals do not go hungry when school is out.

➤ BACKGROUND

Approximately 29.6 million students are eligible to receive free or reduced-price school meals each day during the annual school year. School nutrition programs provide critical nourishment to students to support healthy living and improve cognitive function throughout the school day.¹ A lapse in these benefits during the summer months can have a drastic impact on low-income families.

In 2011, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) launched a pilot Summer EBT program to help replace school lunch benefits during the summer months. The pilot program provided an EBT card that could be used by families with qualifying students to purchase food. In 2018, this pilot program grew to eight states and two Indian Tribal Organizations. The pilot program has been extremely effective, and the USDA concluded that by providing low-income households with a \$30 to \$60 benefit per child each month, the most severe type of food insecurity was reduced by one-third, and food insecurity overall was reduced by one-fifth.²

The necessity of school nutrition programs has become especially pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic. With schools moving to virtual learning, the introduction of Pandemic-EBT – modeled after Summer EBT – has averted severe hunger for many households. The *Stop Child Hunger Act of 2021* will build off the foundation, success, and lessons from Pandemic-EBT and Summer EBT to establish a permanent nutrition program for children from low-income families when they are out of school.³

➤ LEGISLATION

The *Stop Child Hunger Act of 2021* builds upon the Summer EBT proposal in the *Stop Child Summer Hunger Act of 2019* and the American Families Plan and would:

- Convert the Summer EBT pilot into a permanent, nationwide program.
- Authorize EBT cards for eligible households with a balance worth the daily value of school lunch and breakfast to cover school closures of more than five days, including summer and winter school breaks and unanticipated school closures.
- Allow eligible households to use EBT cards for the purchase of food only from retail food stores that have been approved for participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- Provide grants to states to support the development of data systems or upgrades to existing data systems to carry out this program.

➤ ENDORSEMENTS

Food Research Action Center (FRAC), National Education Association, Feeding America, MAZAON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, Food Lifeline, Northwest Harvest, Washington Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition, California Food Bank Association, San Diego Hunger Coalition.

¹[https://schoolnutrition.org/aboutschoolmeals/schoolmealtrendsstats/#:~:text=National%20School%20Lunch%20Program%20\(NSLP,reduced%20price%20\(student%20pays%20%240.40\)](https://schoolnutrition.org/aboutschoolmeals/schoolmealtrendsstats/#:~:text=National%20School%20Lunch%20Program%20(NSLP,reduced%20price%20(student%20pays%20%240.40))

²<https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/frac-facts-summer-ebt-program.pdf>

³<https://fas.org/spp/crs/misc/R46681.pdf>